

Water-project comment period extended

Utes, public get 6 extra weeks to review proposals

By Lazlee E. Whiting
Deseret News correspondent

ROOSEVELT — The Central Utah Water Conservancy District will allow an additional six weeks of public comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement on proposed enlargement of Sandwash Reservoir and other water-related projects in Duchesne County. The request for an extension was made by the Ute Indian Tribe's governing Business Committee.

The public comment period, which typically runs for 30 days after the draft EIS has been released, was originally set to close on March 16. However, the deadline was extended until the end of April when Ute Tribe officials said they hadn't had time for the document to be reviewed by their attorneys and water consultants.

At issue is the potential supply of new storage water made possible through the Uinta Basin Replacement Project. The proposed action is located on the Lake Fork River within the Upalco Unit.

Plans for the \$100 million-plus Upalco Unit were canceled in 1998 after the Ute Tribe refused to support the massive water development

and storage project.

The project authorizes the enlargement of Sandwash Reservoir to 24,000 feet. It also includes the stabilization of high mountain lakes in the High Uintas Wilderness and fish and wildlife habitat mitigation and enhancement.

If constructed, the project would develop new water supplies for municipal and industrial use and supplemental irrigation, replacement storage for the high mountain lakes irrigation water, enhance wilderness recreation, fish and wildlife values, and provide stream flows for fishery habitat.

All agencies and individuals who received the draft EIS on this aspect of the project were notified that the public com-

ment period has been extended, said Nancy Hardman, technical editor for the Central Utah Water Conservancy District.

All comments will be addressed and included in the final EIS. The publication date of the final document will depend on the number of comments and how long it takes to respond to them, and negotiation of contracts with the water users, including the Department of Interior and Central Utah Water Conservancy District. Fifty comments were submitted to the conservancy prior to the initial March 16 deadline.

"In general, comments have been very positive so far, especially in regard to the high mountain lakes stabilization

proposal," Hardman said.

The Central Utah Water Conservancy District and the U.S. Department of Interior are the joint lead agencies in preparing the environmental assessment. The actual work would be overseen by the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. The Draft Environmental Assessment is available for public review from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District by contacting Nancy Hardman, at 801-226-7187, FAX 801-226-7150, or e-mail nancy@cuwcd.com

Fishlake chief named

The USDA Forest Service has promoted Mary Erickson to supervisor of the Fishlake National Forest.

She will leave her post as deputy forest supervisor of the Winema and Fremont National Forest in Oregon to manage the Richfield area forest.

Rob Mrowka, the former supervisor, transferred to Forest Service's intermountain regional office in Ogden, where he is the species conservation manager.